

I rise to pay tribute today to one of Minnesota's outstanding community leaders and a longtime resident of my Congressional District, Marcia Avner. This month, Marcia Avner is transitioning from her position as Public Policy Director for the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (MCN), a position she has held for the past 14 years, to Senior Fellow at MCN, where she will continue to do what she has done best for so many years; advising and training emerging nonprofit sector advocates at both the state and national levels.

Marcia has distinguished herself in several realms. She is an incredibly effective and inspirational advocate and organizer, a teacher and promoter of the art of public advocacy, and a distinguished public servant at the local, state and federal levels of government. Her work includes advocacy and civic engagement training and education as well as lobbying on election reform, tax policy, and many other issues important to nonprofits and the people they serve. Marcia teaches with her husband, Wy Spano, at the Center on Advocacy and Political Leadership at the University of Minnesota--Duluth, where she is inspiring the next generation of great nonprofit leaders. She has traveled all over the country and abroad, to England, Poland and Hungary, to conduct national advocacy and organizing institutes and seminars for nonprofit centers, academic centers, and for Wellstone Action, a nonprofit dedicated to progressive social change.

Marcia gives a presentation called "Lobbying for the Truly Intimidated," in which she tells the story of her own first legislative experience, testifying on hearing aid reform as a parent of a hearing impaired son. She went to the wrong building with a dome: the Cathedral of Saint Paul instead of the State Capitol. It was a fitting recognition of Marcia's dual roles that in 2003 she was recognized as "Teacher of the Year" by Hamline University for her course on Public Policy and Nonprofits, and in the same year received "Activist of the Year" from the Minnesota Alliance for Progressive Action.

Marcia has played a key role in developing the field of nonprofit advocacy, with numerous articles and two books: "The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations: Shaping Public Policy at the State and Local Level" (2002); and "The Board Member's Guide to Lobbying and Advocacy" (2004).

Marcia's effectiveness in local, state and federal government relations is the result of her experience working as Communications Director for the late U.S. Senator Paul Wellstone, Deputy Mayor of St. Paul, Executive Director of The Minnesota Project, Assistant Commissioner of Energy for the State of Minnesota, and Legislative Director with the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG). Not everyone knows that Marcia served in several key roles for MCN before she became Director of Public Policy: as one of the original planners in 1986 at a retreat at Wilder Forest; one of the three incorporators when MCN filed with the Secretary of State, and as MCN's first Board Chair and convener of the first MCN Annual Conference in 1987. Marcia built MCN's public policy program and developed a national reputation for MCN in the areas of public policy and capacity building.

Marcia is always generous with her time and her insights, meeting and speaking with small groups on nights and weekends as well as serving on numerous community and nonprofit

boards. Her work includes serving on the board of directors of Lifetrack Resources, Inc., the Governor's Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the Center for Lobbying in the Public Interest, Wellstone Action, the Wellstone Action Fund, and the Nonprofit Information Networking Association which publishes The Nonprofit Quarterly. Marcia has a BA from Carnegie Mellon University and an MA from the University of Arkansas.

Madam Speaker, as we honor Marcia's service to the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, it is fitting to quote from the dedication of her book, "The Lobbying and Advocacy Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations." As she quotes her grandmother, Marcia tells us something about why she has been and will continue to be such an effective advocate for nonprofit organizations in Minnesota and across the nation: "This book is dedicated to nonprofits' achievements in shaping public policy--past, present, and future. Remember: "You Don't Ask, You Don't Get' Grandma Mania Zaludkowski."